

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER  
LISTED

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

DEC 30 2009

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A) Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name Topeka Council of Colored Women's Clubs Building  
Other name/site number 177-5400-01246

### 2. Location

Street & number 1149 SW Lincoln ☐ not for publication  
City or town Topeka ☐ vicinity  
State Kansas Code KS County Shawnee Code 177 Zip code 66604

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination  
☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of  
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  
☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  
☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Patricia J. Palmer  
Signature of certifying official/Title  
Kansas State Historical Society

11-18-09

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional  
Comments.)

Signature of commenting official /Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- ☐ entered in the National Register.  
☐ See continuation sheet.  
☐ determined eligible for the National  
Register  
☐ See continuation sheet.  
☐ determined not eligible for the  
National Register  
☐ removed from the National  
Register  
☐ other, (explain:)

Topeka Council of Colored Women's Clubs Building  
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas  
County and State

### 5. Classification

#### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

#### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

#### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

buildings

sites

structures

objects

1

total

#### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

#### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

### 6. Function or Use

#### Historic Functions

(Enter Categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

SOCIAL/meeting hall

#### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

### 7. Description

#### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne

#### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: Stone

Walls: Wood

Roof: Asphalt

Other:

#### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Topeka Council of Colored Women's Clubs Building  
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas  
County and State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Social History

Ethnic Heritage

### Period of Significance

ca. 1931-1959

### Significant Dates

ca. 1900, 1931

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

### Cultural Affiliation

African-American

### Architect/Builder

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
# \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering  
Record # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

Topeka Council of Colored Women's Clubs

Shawnee County, Kansas

Name of Property

County and State

**10. Geographical Data**Acreage of Property less than one acre**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	5	2	6	6	8	1	3	4	3	2	5	5	4	4
Zone			Easting						Northing						

3															
Zone			Easting						Northing						

☐ See continuation sheet**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**Name/title Christy DavisOrganization Davis PreservationDate 7/25/2009Street & number 909 1/2 Kansas Ave, Suite 7Telephone 785-234-5053City or town TopekaState KansasZip code 66612**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets****Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional Items**

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**Name Living the Dream

Street &amp; number

Telephone

City or town Topeka

State

Kansas

Zip code

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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Shawnee County, Kansas*

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### Narrative Description

#### Setting

The Topeka Council of Colored Women's Clubs building is located at 1149 SW Lincoln Street in Topeka (pop. 122,377), Shawnee County, Kansas. The building is located in the Bonaventura Addition, in the heart of Tennessee Town, one of Topeka's traditional African-American neighborhoods. Tennessee Town is approximately 1 mile southwest of downtown, bounded on the north by 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, on the south by Huntoon Street, on the east by Clay Street, and on the west by Washburn Avenue. The neighborhood is adjacent to Topeka's medical district and the Topeka Shawnee County Public Library. Having first been settled by Exodusters who fled the Jim-Crow South in the late 1870s, the area was traditionally occupied by a concentration of single-family homes on small lots. Unfortunately, many of these homes have been demolished.

#### Exterior

The Women's Clubs building is a vernacular 1 ½ story balloon-framed T-plan house with applied Queen Anne details. The building faces east, with a front-gabled bay on the north, a side-gabled bay on the south, and a one-story bay projecting from the west/rear elevation. Most exterior wall surfaces are clad in horizontal wood clapboard. The roof is sheathed in asphalt shingles. Distinctive exterior features, inspired by Queen Anne architecture, include spindlework on porches and fish-scale shingles on the front-facing gables. The building sits on a limestone foundation.

#### Front (East) Elevation

The front elevation faces east. A one-story porch is the defining feature of the front elevation, stretching the house's full width across the front gable on the north and side elevation on the south. The shed porch roof is supported by five square posts. Decorative brackets on both sides of the columns support a delicate spindlework frieze. The frieze wraps around the north and south sides of the porch, supported on the west sides by pilasters on the wall. The front gable on the north has two single 2/2 wood windows centered on its first floor and a pair of 1/1 wood windows partially nestled in the gable. Above the second-story windows, the gable is clad with fish-scale shingles. The first floor of the side gable houses a centered main entrance, flanked by windows - a clerestory window opening with a leaded-glass window on the south, and a larger 1/1 window on the north. The second floor of the side gable houses a centered door that opens onto a second-story porch/terrace. The porch is covered by a gabled roof. The gable is clad with fish-scale shingles. The porch has square supports, spindlework railing, and spindlework frieze. South of the porch is a 2/2 double-hung wood window.

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### North Elevation

The clapboard exterior of the north elevation is interrupted only by three window openings, a 2/2 double-hung window on the first floor of the east end, a clerestory window on the first floor in the center, and a 2/2 window on the west end of the second floor. The 2/2 window on the east end of the first floor has a pedimented lintel. On the west end, the north elevation of the one-story west-projecting bay is visible. There are no openings on this elevation. This bay is also clad with horizontal clapboard.

### South Elevation

A one-story west-projecting bay extends from the west end of the south elevation. This bay, which dates to 1987, is located at the historic location of a 10' x 10' storage addition. According to records on file at the Kansas SHPO, this storage addition was removed in 1979. This bay has a shallow gabled roof with small porch whose details match those of the main porch on the front elevation – including square supports and spindlework frieze. There is a 1/1 wood window on the west end and door on the east end. The south elevation of the north gable has 2/2 windows on both the first and second floors. The second-floor window is a clerestory window. The south elevation of the side gable has no openings on the first floor. The second floor houses a pair of windows and door access to the second-floor apartment. The apartment door is accessed via a non-historic exposed wood stair with landing. Above these openings, the gable is clad with fish-scale shingles.

### Rear (West) Elevation

The west elevation of the one-story west-projecting bay has no openings. The west elevation of the second floor of the north gable has a single 1/1 window with a pedimented lintel. There is only one opening on the west elevation of the side gable. It is a 2/2 double-hung clerestory window.

### Interior

The interior is very simple, with historic features including the original floorplan, plaster walls, wood baseboards and trim. There are nine rooms in the house. The first floor is occupied by a living room on the south, dining room on the north, and storage room, half bath and kitchen on the west. Historically, the second floor was accessible via a stair in the living room on the first floor. When the Topeka Council of Colored Women's Clubs purchased the house, it converted the second floor, which originally housed bedrooms, to an apartment. According to materials on file at the Kansas SHPO, the interior stair was removed ca. 1940. At the same time, a new bathroom was constructed on the first floor. Today, the second floor is only accessible via an exterior stair and entrance on the south side. The existing stair was constructed in 1987. The stair opens to a living room (formerly a bedroom). The east-projecting gable houses a small kitchen. The west-projecting gable houses a bedroom and full bathroom. The current finishes in the bathroom and kitchen date to the ca. 1980s. Historic finishes, including plaster, wood baseboards and window/door trim, remain extant. The original pine floors were covered with oak flooring in ca. 1940.

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### Statement of Significance

#### Introduction

The Topeka Council of Colored Women's Clubs building is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Social History and Ethnic Heritage. The building served as a meeting place for the organization from 1931 until 2009. The building's period of significance stretches from 1931 through 1959.

#### A Brief History of Black Topeka

Topeka was founded in late 1854 by leaders of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, which chose the location where a branch of the Oregon Trail crossed the Kansas River. By the time the Kansas Territorial Legislature incorporated Topeka in 1857, the city boasted a population of 600, third in size to pro-slavery towns Atchison and Leavenworth. By 1858, however, free-staters outnumbered pro-slavery settlers; and the free-state Wyandotte Constitution designated Topeka as the temporary capital in 1859. When Kansas entered the Union as a free state in 1861, Topeka was named as permanent state capital.

The new capital's oft-boasted anti-slavery heritage was no guarantee of black freedom. In 1855, delegates to the free-state Topeka Constitutional convention voted to exclude even free blacks from the new state. The delegates may not have realized the significant role that African Americans, particularly African-American women, played in the community's early settlement. Topeka's first African-American settler was Ann Davis Shattio, the "full-blooded Negro" wife of Clement Shattio, a white farmer credited for being the community's first permanent settler (1852).<sup>1</sup>

By 1855, Shawnee County was home to forty-eight free blacks and thirty-three slaves.<sup>2</sup> By 1858, when the freestaters had gained a stronghold, the African-American population had grown to a number sufficient to support the city's first black fraternal order, the Shawnee Mission Lodge.<sup>3</sup> Soon after Kansas entered the Union as a free state in 1861, African Americans, many of them fugitive slaves from Arkansas and Missouri, poured across its eastern and southern borders. Some of these formed the First Colored Infantry Regiment, which fought for the Union in the Civil War.

As the nation forged West in the post-war years, Topeka's population exploded 662%, from 759 to 5790 between 1860 and 1870. It tripled again to 15,528 by 1880; and doubled to 31,007 by 1890.<sup>4</sup> Among

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas C. Cox, *Blacks in Topeka, Kansas: 1865-1915* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>4</sup> U. S. Census, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1890.

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those who found homes in the fledgling city were blacks, pulled by frontier economic opportunities in the state whose name was synonymous with freedom. By 1875, African Americans had established formal bonds through five fraternal organizations and two principal African-American churches, St. John's AME (NRHP) and the Second Baptist Church.<sup>5</sup>

The steady black migration in the post-war years surrendered to the Black Exodus after the federal government withdrew troops from the South in 1877. As the South fell under the control of Jim Crow laws, Southern blacks reasoned that "It [was] better to starve to death in Kansas than be shot and killed in the South."<sup>6</sup> In 1879 and 1880, 25,000 southern blacks emigrated to Kansas, some with little more than the shirts on their backs. The influx of emigrants taxed the system and overwhelmed a prejudiced public. It became necessary that Topeka's established black community step in to aid its "persecuted brethren."<sup>7</sup>

The Exodusters, who arrived in Topeka at a rate of 300 per month, were crowded into crude barracks in North Topeka until they could establish homes in the King's Addition in Topeka's Third Ward. This neighborhood, which came to be known as "Tennessee Town," would later house the Topeka Council of Colored Women's Clubs.<sup>8</sup>

Topeka's fate was tied closely to that of the railroad, particularly the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe, which was chartered by Topeka town founder Cyrus K. Holliday in 1859. From the time it began laying track in the late 1860s, the line played a significant role in the state's settlement, marketing land to immigrant farmers and attracting workers from a diverse range of backgrounds. In the years after 1878, when the Santa Fe established its general offices and machine shops in Topeka, the company offered jobs for unskilled laborers – White, Black and Latino. Many of the city's black residents were concentrated in neighborhoods in the city's Third Ward and First Ward, near the Santa Fe shops.

The expansion of the Santa Fe and arrival of other railroads contributed to an extraordinary real estate boom in the 1880s. In 1888 alone, 3000 new buildings were built – and those who were not employed by the railroads were readily employed in the construction trades. Although the majority of black Topekans were employed as unskilled laborers, a black middle class was forming in the 1880s.<sup>9</sup> Professional success and financial security afforded the city's middle-class blacks with the luxury of establishing organizations to further improve their plight. For example, a black YMCA was organized in 1885. A growing number of middle-class women, whose economic situation did not require that they work outside

<sup>5</sup> Cox, 30-32.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 47.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 76.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 91-92.



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the home, turned their attentions to volunteer pursuits. In 1887, they organized the Colored Women's Suffrage Association.<sup>10</sup>

The city benefitted from the railroad's success -- and bore the brunt of the railroad's failures. Like most railroads, the Santa Fe over-expanded in the 1880s and went bankrupt in the 1890s. When the boom busted, 5000 people left the deflated city.<sup>11</sup>

It was not until the 1910s that the city's population finally recovered and the business elite began to build again. The city steadily grew in the first half of the twentieth century, doubling between 1900 and 1940, when the population reached 67,833.<sup>12</sup> During the Progressive Era, Topeka was at the center of reform and religious activities. In 1919, the Menninger Clinic, which became a nationwide leader in moral psychiatric treatment, opened. Its founder Dr. Karl Menninger wrote the 1930 national bestseller *The Human Mind*, an early study of human behavior. Other reform trends included the Social Gospel movement, which applied Christian principals to social problems. In his bestseller *In His Steps*, Topeka minister Charles Sheldon asked Christian reformers to make decisions based upon "What Would Jesus Do?"<sup>13</sup> Among Sheldon's ventures was a kindergarten and library in Tennessee Town, less than a block south of the home that would become the headquarters for the Topeka Council of Colored Women's Clubs.<sup>14</sup> The era of religious reform spawned new ways to worship. Among Topeka's contributions was Pentacostalism, a religious movement distinguished by the incidence of glossolalia (speaking in tongues).<sup>15</sup>

During World War I and the years that followed, the growth of Topeka's African-American community followed the national trend known as the "Great Migration." The war created a labor shortage that again drew Southern blacks north to work in industry. The trend continued in the postwar years. Between 1920 and 1930, Topeka's African-American population burgeoned more than ten fold, with many arriving to work for the Santa Fe Railroad.<sup>16</sup>

Topeka attracted national attention in the 1930s, when it was home to national figures in both the

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>11</sup> Frank Blackmar, *Kansas: a cyclopedia of state history, embracing events, institutions, industries, counties, cities, towns, prominent persons, etc.* (Chicago: Standard Publishing Co., 1912), 811-815.

<sup>12</sup> U. S. Census.

<sup>13</sup> "The Rev. Charles Sheldon -- In His Name," *Topeka Capital-Journal* 24 November 2001; See Charles Sheldon, *In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?* (Chicago: Advance Publishing Co., 1898); Alan F. Bearman and Jennifer L. Mills, "Charles M. Sheldon and Charles F. Parham: Adapting Christianity to the Challenges of the American West," *Kansas History* v. 32, no. 2 (Summer 2009).

<sup>14</sup> 1913 Sanborn Map.

<sup>15</sup> "Pentecostal movement has its roots in Topeka," *Topeka Capital-Journal* 17 August 1997.

<sup>16</sup> U. S. Census, 1920, 1930.

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Democratic and Republican Parties. Georgia Neese Clark Gray, who served as the Democratic National Committee Chairwoman, would later become the first woman to hold the position of U. S. Treasurer.<sup>17</sup> Better known was Kansas Governor Alf Landon, who famously challenged Franklin Roosevelt in the presidential race of 1936.

The Topeka Army Air Field, later known as Forbes Field, and other industries attracted new residents during World War II. Among the war-related industries was the Goodyear Tire Plant, which has remained a staple of the local economy for more than six decades.<sup>18</sup> The war forever changed the expectations of blacks, who were forced to return from the indiscriminate battlefield to an America still torn by prejudice. Among the Topekans who took on the Civil Rights cause was Oliver Brown, a railroad worker whose daughters were forced to cross a railroad switchyard to attend the all-black school a mile away from their house. In 1954, the landmark desegregation case, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, struck down the "separate but equal" doctrine and ushered in the broader Civil Rights Movement.

A series of natural disasters in the mid twentieth century greatly affected the community. The 1951 flood forced 17,000 Topekans from their homes and destroyed businesses, like the Morrell Meat Packing Plant, resulting in the loss of 1000 jobs.<sup>19</sup> A devastating tornado in 1966 killed 13 people, destroyed neighborhoods, and caused \$100 million in damage to the city's buildings, including the Kansas Statehouse.<sup>20</sup> These tragic events disproportionately affected the city's minority population, many of whom lived and worked in low-lying areas and substandard buildings. Those that were not destroyed by natural disasters were taken down with Urban Renewal funds to make room for Interstate 70.

Despite setbacks, the city's population nearly doubled from 67,833 to 125,011 between 1940 and 1970.<sup>21</sup> Although the population has remained steady since that time, the percentage of African Americans has increased from 9% in 1930 to 12% today. Many of the city's residents are among the 42,000 state employees.

### Colored Women's Clubs

For more than a century, the nation's African-American women have relied on "Colored Women's Clubs" in their effort to "Lift as they climb." African-American women began organizing in the 1880s and 1890s, during a time of escalating discrimination and segregation.

<sup>17</sup> "Kansans have had many White House ties," *Topeka Capital-Journal* 16 May 2004.

<sup>18</sup> Topeka Chamber of Commerce, Business History, <http://www.topekachamber.org/s/index.cfm?aid=50>.

<sup>19</sup> "Flood of the Century: Reflections of the Flood" *Topeka Capital-Journal* 8 July 2001. Also Topeka Chamber of Commerce.

<sup>20</sup> "1966 Tornado - Hard Times," *Topeka Capital-Journal* 8 June 2006.

<sup>21</sup> U. S. Census, 1940, 1970.

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Ironically, white women's efforts to secure gender equality were racially segregated. The Women's Columbian Association's barring of black women's exhibits at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition (1893), motivated black women to organize.<sup>22</sup> In 1896, two groups united to form the National Association of Colored Women.<sup>23</sup>

Like the white women's clubs, colored women's clubs were interested in Victorian ideals of self expression and morality, from temperance to needlepoint. But in addition, African-American women fought for basic Civil Rights for their entire race. Among the issues to which black women drew attention were lynching and segregation. Black clubwomen also worked to help the 36% of black women (over the age of 10) who were working outside their homes. Middle-class professions, in which black men were making inroads, were nearly off limits to black women. For instance, whereas there were 16,784 women physicians in the United States by 1920, only 70 of them were black. The vast majority of working black women were employed as domestics. The women's clubs worked to establish child care and kindergartens to help working women.<sup>24</sup>

By 1916, 10,000 women were members of 300 clubs affiliated with the national association.<sup>25</sup> Among the statewide groups was the Kansas Association of Colored Women's Clubs, founded 1896 and chartered in 1906.<sup>26</sup> In the 1910s, the members of Kansas colored women's clubs joined the national effort to put a stop to lynching. The threat to blacks was very real even in the state that had provided many an escape from the Jim Crow South. A new wave of institutionalized prejudice, which included the reorganization of the Ku Klux Klan, came in the 1910s and 1920s. By 1922, the Klan had 40,000 members in Kansas. The Klan was ousted from Kansas in 1925.

Colored women's clubs were instrumental in shaping African-American communities in cities throughout the state and nation.

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<sup>22</sup> How Did African-American Women Define Their Citizenship at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893?, Documents selected and interpreted by Kathryn Kish Sklar and Erin Shaughnessy State University of New York at Binghamton May 1997 (<http://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com/wasm/wasmrestricted/ibw/intro.htm>).

<sup>23</sup> S. J. Kleinberg, *Women in the United States, 1830-1945* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 164-165.

<sup>24</sup> Karen Graves, *Girls' schooling during the Progressive Era: From Female Scholar to Domesticated Citizen* (New York: Garland, 1998), 57; Nell Irvin Painter, *Creating Black Americans: African-American History and its Meanings, 1619 to the Present* (Oxford 2006), 156.

<sup>25</sup> blackpast.org, accessed 4/27/2009.

<sup>26</sup> "Meeting Focuses on Youth, *Topeka Capital-Journal*, 28 Jun 1999.

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### **The Topeka Council of Colored Women's Clubs (TCCWC)**

The nominated property was constructed as a single-family residence in 1901 by William Warren, a Topeka dairyman and grocer.<sup>27</sup> After his death in 1928, Warren's daughter Georgiana Warren lived alone in the home. Since 1931, the building has been occupied by the Topeka Council of Colored Women's Clubs (TCCWC).

The Council was made up of multiple clubs, three of which were founded in 1898. (In the 1970s, the Topeka Council of Colored Women's Clubs included members of five clubs: Ne Plus Ultra Art and Literary Club, Ornamental Art and Literary Club, Oak Leaf Art and Charity Club, Stella Puella Literary and Art Club, and Elite Art and Literary Club.) In 1900, three of the clubs joined the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, which was founded in 1896.

The NACWC's founding coincided with the landmark Supreme Court Case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which formalized the concept of "Separate but Equal." For much of the twentieth century, parallel white and black institutions, including women's clubs, were the rule. In 1897, white women organized to form the Federation of Women's Clubs of Topeka. The African-American women's organization the following year was likely prompted by their exclusion from the white women's federation.

For its first 30 years, the black clubwomen met in homes and churches. In 1931, however, Emma Gaines, the widow of African-American mortician Ben Gaines, loaned money to the TCCWC to purchase the Warren home for a clubhouse. For a decade after purchasing the Warren home, the TCCWC was committed to paying off the loan – through the sale of baked goods and cookbooks. The organization used the proceeds from fundraisers to provide college scholarships to "deserving" black students.

As organizations became increasingly racially and gender integrated, and women entered professional careers, membership in women's clubs declined. (The traditionally white women's federation disbanded and sold its building in the 1980s.) To ensure the long-term preservation of their building, the Topeka Council of Colored Women's Clubs recently transferred the property to Living the Dream, Inc., a Topeka-based organization dedicated to spreading the message of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> City of Topeka Building Permits Index, Kansas Historical Society. William Warren was white. Neither he nor his daughter had any formal ties to the Topeka Council of Colored Women's Clubs.

<sup>28</sup> The author reviewed a number of primary resources, including manuscript collections and years of editions of the *Topeka Plaindealer*, Topeka's African-American newspaper, in search of a record of the organization's founding and activities. Unfortunately, no primary documentation was found.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Shawnee County, Kansas*

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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*Topeka Council of Colored Women's Clubs  
Shawnee County, Kansas*

### Verbal Boundary Description

The legal description for the Topeka Council of Colored Women's Clubs is as follows: W H BROOKS JR 2ND (BONA), Lot 391 +, LINCOLN ST LOTS 391-393-FRL 395 BRO OKS 2ND -BONAVENTURE ADD-SECTION 36 TOWNSHIP 11 RANGE 15

### Boundary Justification

The above is the legal description for the nominated property. These boundaries include the parcels historically associated with the nominated property.

### Photo Log

Photos 1-8 were taken by Christy Davis in December 2008. Photos 9-12 were taken by Christy Davis in November 2009. Digital negatives are on file at the Kansas State Historic Preservation Office, Topeka.

1. East (Front) Elevation Looking West.
2. East and North Elevations Looking Southwest.
3. South and West (Rear) Elevations, Looking Northeast.
4. West (Rear) Elevation, Looking East.
5. Closeup of spindlework on Front Elevation.
6. Closeup of porch on Front Elevation.
7. 1987 addition, Looking Southwest.
8. Second-floor interior, showing typical plaster walls, baseboards and window trim.
9. Living Room, looking northeast toward front door and dining room.
10. Living Room, looking northwest at fireplace.
11. Closeup of bullseye cornerblock, typical.
12. Dining Room, looking northeast from living room.



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Topeka Council of  
Colored Women's  
Cwbc Bldg.  
Shawnee Co, KS  
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Zone 15